EXCEPTIONS TO THE FULL COURSE OF STUDY REQUIREMENT FOR J-1 EXCHANGE VISITORS IN THE STUDENT & NON-DEGREE STUDENT CATEGORIES

- J-1 exchange visitors in the university student (undergraduate or graduate level) category are required to be engaged in a full course of study, defined as 12 credits/semester (fall and spring) for undergraduates and 9 credits for graduates. Online courses cannot be counted toward this credit requirement, but can be taken in addition to these credit loads. Students can be exempted from this requirement under the conditions noted below. Documentation of a reduced course load authorization by the Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer will be kept in the student’s file.

- J-1 exchange visitors in the non-degree student category must follow “a prescribed course of study with a specific educational objective.” The course of study may include intensive English language training, classroom instruction, research projects, and/or academic training (restrictions apply).

- Students with concerns about maintaining a full course load should come to OIP for advising. Please read the list of exceptions below prior and note that these are the only exceptions permitted under J-1 visa regulations.

- Exceptions to the Full Course of Study Requirement

**22 C.F.R. § 62.23(e)(1)-(6)**

1. **Vacation.** During official school breaks and summer vacations if the student is eligible and intends to register for the next term. A student attending a school on a quarter or trimester calendar may be permitted to take the annual vacation during any one of the quarters or trimesters instead of during the summer.

2. **Medical illness.** If the student is compelled to reduce or interrupt a full course of study due to an illness or medical condition and the student presents to the responsible officer a written statement from a physician requiring or recommending an interruption or reduction in studies.

3. **Bona fide academic reason.** If the student is compelled to pursue less than a full course of study for a term and the student presents to the responsible officer a written statement from the academic dean or advisor recommending the student to reduce his or her academic load to less than a full course of study due to an academic reason.

4. **Non-degree program.** If the student is engaged full time in a prescribed course of study in a non-degree program of up to 24 months duration conducted by a post-secondary accredited academic institution.

5. **Academic training.** If the student is participating in authorized academic training in accordance with paragraph (f) of this section.

6. **Final term.** If the student needs less than a full course of study to complete the academic requirements in his or her final term.